



COVID-19 Guidance for Funerals and Funeral Homes

Lewis and Clark Public Health (LCPH) is working to curb the spread of COVID-19 in our community. At this time, LCPH – along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services – strongly recommends social distancing as a key strategy to limit the spread of this disease. Social distancing is defined as avoiding group gatherings of over 10 people and keeping at least 6 feet between individuals at all times. In light of these guidelines, LCPH recommends that funeral homes modify operations to meet this guidance. Such aggressive efforts will help protect our community from COVID-19.

More information for funeral home workers is available at [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Infection Control for the Funeral Home

- Use standard infection-control practices when working with individuals who died from COVID-19.
- Use standard personal protective equipment (PPE), including equipment that protects eyes, nose, and mouth, when preparing a body or embalming, especially if fluids might splash.
- Work with families and community cultural and religious leaders to reduce exposure to body fluids during ceremonial practices such as shrouding and directly handling or washing the body. Encourage families to wear personal protective equipment if possible (such as disposable gown, face shield or goggles and face mask). Encourage hand hygiene at the end of the ceremony.
- Follow routine cleaning and disinfection procedures using an EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectant to clean the mortuary work area.

Funeral Guidance

- Bury or cremate decedents following current state requirements.
- Limit funeral services to 10 people and hold in a venue that accommodates social distancing of at least 6 feet between individuals.
- Consider livestreaming as an option for services and viewings.
- Discourage families from providing food or beverages at the service.
- Suggest that families consider postponing the funeral until restrictions on the numbers of attendees are lifted; this might be several months or longer.
- Although at this time there is no known risk associated with being in the same room with the body of someone who died of COVID-19, recommend that attendees avoid touching or kissing the body.
- Instruct anyone who feels sick or is part of a high-risk population (the elderly and those with serious existing conditions) to stay home.
- Encourage families to scale back direct contact (like handshakes, hugging, and kissing) at the service or funeral.
 - Supply tissues and alcohol-based hand rubs for participants to use.
 - Stock an adequate supply of soap and paper towels in restrooms.